

Against the Grain

Volume 25 | Issue 3

Article 35

June 2013

I Hear the Train A Comin'-An Interview with the SIPX Team

Greg Tanenbaum

ScholarNext Consulting, greg@scholarnext.com

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Recommended Citation

Tanenbaum, Greg (2013) "I Hear the Train A Comin'-An Interview with the SIPX Team," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 25: Iss. 3, Article 35.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.6542>

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I Hear the Train A Comin' — An Interview with the SIPX Team



Column Editor: **Greg Tananbaum** (ScholarNext Consulting) <greg@scholarnext.com> www.scholarnext.com

There has been a good deal of buzz in recent months about MOOCs — massive, open, online courses. One organization that has recently launched to address some of the opportunities in this space is SIPX. I recently interviewed two of the key executives about SIPX and the current MOOC landscape. **Franny Lee** is VP University Relations and Product Development and a co-founder of SIPX, Inc. Originally a musician, Franny was drawn to copyright and Internet policy by experiencing firsthand its effects on the music industry. She is an IP lawyer in both the U.S. and Canada, with over ten years of hands-on legal experience. **Heather Ruland Staines** is Vice President Publisher Development at SIPX (formerly **Stanford Intellectual Property Exchange**) where she is exploring the nexus of academic publishing, library technology, and the future of eLearning. Prior to SIPX, she worked for **Springer**, as Senior Manager eOperations and Global eProduct Manager SpringerLink. Active in many industry groups, Heather currently serves on the Board of Directors for the **Society for Scholarly Publishers** and as Chair of the **ALA ALCTS CRS Holdings Information Committee**. She is a recent member of the Transfer Working Group. She holds a Ph.D. in History from **Yale University**.

What is SIPX?

Franny Lee (FL): SIPX is a new cloud-based technology, created to solve copyright frustrations in higher education. The system incorporates royalty-free and pay-per-use content options, manages copyrights, and delivers digital documents. It's the first and only end-to-end service with these capabilities, and truly benefits all parties in this copyright ecosystem.

How did SIPX come to be?

FL: SIPX is rooted in **Stanford University** research and began life as the **Stanford Intellectual Property Exchange** (which is where our company name comes from). This multi-year, grant-funded research project took a deep look into how to use technology to improve inefficient copyright processes and open up channels to content, and make it easier for people to understand complicated aspects of copyright. We examined and consulted with all types of academic copyright stakeholders, such as libraries, university management, educators, students, content creators, publishers, owners, aggregators, and rights agents. The first pro-

totype piloted at **Stanford** in April 2011, and the pilots continued to grow and improve the system until SIPX spun out last fall to begin operating as a commercial service.

Who is behind it?

FL: SIPX, Inc.'s core management team, founders, and board members are experts with wide experience and relationships across education, publishing, copyright law, digital media, and technology development. The company closed its first round of institutional financing in October, including funding from **XSeed Capital Management**, **Mohr Davidow Ventures**, **Stanford University**, **Ulu Ventures**, **Konica Minolta**, and a number of strategic angel investors.

What problem is SIPX attempting to solve?

FL: The current state of copyright in higher education is a complicated maze — from a user's perspective, it's almost impossible to understand what content is available, how you are allowed to use that content, and how to distribute that content properly. Managing copyrights without networked technology is difficult and expensive, and SIPX was created to solve these problems.

SIPX can blend seamlessly into campus systems and online education environments such as MOOCs to help professors enrich their educational materials by bringing together free and pay-per-use course material options to students faster, easier, and legally. Students can download content and pay less because SIPX recognizes and appropriately applies different discounts or existing rights, such as library subscriptions. Libraries are made visible to students, instructors, and researchers for the licenses they purchase and manage. SIPX's analytics

data also helps schools accurately understand what content students are purchasing and connecting with, and how to leverage that content most effectively.

Heather Staines (HS): Publishers benefit from analytics data as well. Publishing editors

will now have more detailed information to share with authors, series editors, and editorial boards about how and where their content is used, as well as rich aggregated data to show how price points of comparable content perform with users and in different contexts. Now in the global arena of MOOCs, these analytics are even more useful and necessary.

What are MOOCs, and who is using them?

FL: A "MOOC" is a massive, open, online course accessible to everyone in the world through the Internet, and usually hosted through MOOC provider platforms such as edX, Coursera, Udacity, NoVoEd, and others. They typically involve streamed video lectures, with instructor slides, interactive student discussion groups, and periodic quizzes or assignments that might be peer-graded. The instructor is often from a well-known university, and the MOOC helps raise the profile for the faculty and institution. Some MOOCs have drawn in over 100,000 initial student registrants, and even though not everyone com-

pletes the course, the instructor is able to touch a student group that is much more varied and orders of magnitude larger than anything possible in an on-campus class. MOOC students come from pretty much every country and background imaginable.

Why should libraries care about MOOCs?

FL: Creating and teaching a MOOC takes time and money, and they are usually funded by the affiliated school. Some tasks are often directed to the library, particularly those issues dealing with content and copyright. For a library, therefore, a MOOC provides both an opportunity to extend its service and value to its institution, as well as significant additional workload and expense to deal with highly complex copyright, risk, and permissions issues given the broad reach of a MOOC.

Why should publishers care about MOOCs?

HS: Given the success of the early MOOCs, which mainly covered topics in computer science or physics, it was only a matter of time before MOOCs expanded to cover every possible discipline. Providing content is a big challenge. Publishers need to be aware of the vast opportunities in higher education beyond the bricks-and-mortar university market and

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Franny Lee, VP University Relations and Product Development



Heather Ruland Staines
VP Publisher Development

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now have opportunities to experiment with new pricing and access models. As technology improves and the desire for knowledge increases, demand for content in online education will continue to grow.

How are MOOCs changing the provision of content to students?


FL: I think there are two sides to this question. First, the type of content being provided to students is limited by the resources a school has available for creating that MOOC. We hear from MOOC instructors that they want to provide the richest learning experience possible to their students at a higher education standard. Sometimes openly available free content is appropriate, but sometimes it's also necessary to require or recommend readings from content under copyright. The work and cost involved for a school in these cases is prohibitive, and the **SIPX** service is a solution to these problems. In addition, **SIPX**'s analytics provide hard data for better understanding the continuing changes in content and education.

Second, we also need to look at how students are consuming MOOCs and the content within. In most cases, a MOOC student's motivations for taking the class are different from an on-campus student that commits (through tuition and degree incentives) to finishing the entire class. For example, the MOOC student might only be interested in one or two key topics, or only want a high-level overview. So a one-coursepack/textbook-fits-all mentality won't work for every student in the class, and the **SIPX** service opens up options and empowers students to make their own choices.

What type of content is attractive to MOOC instructors?


HS: MOOC instructors want the best supporting materials for their students, whether that content is subscription-based, open access, or public domain. We're seeing interest in articles, book chapters, newspaper, and magazine content. Thus, **SIPX** works with all types of publishers whose titles cut across all subjects and disciplines.

What has the response been like to date?



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FL: There's definitely broad and deep interest in the **SIPX** service, ranging from school faculty, librarians and management, school consortiums, as well as MOOC providers and the content industry, and we are ramping up with schools and content partners quickly. I feel that the main reason is because we solve a real problem felt across a huge, fragmented ecosystem; as the first end-to-end service that connects all the players and creates an efficient,

logical network. The efficiencies through the **SIPX** platform are obvious — there are cost-saving benefits of license filtering (the ability to recognize and apply pre-existing rights from complex licenses such as library subscriptions), easy pay-per-use channels now open, analytics for better collections and pricing decisions, more efficient use of human resources, better copyright education on campus, and reduced infringement liability. 🌸

Little Red Herrings — Now, Don't Go Chasing Rabbits

by **Mark Y. Herring** (Dean of Library Services, Dacus Library, Winthrop University) <herringm@winthrop.edu>

The *Ithaca U.S. Faculty Survey 2012* (<http://bit.ly/10NnQw9>) is out, and by the time you read my blur, it will have cobwebs on it, and the 2013 will be well on the way. So, why write about it at all? First, it's always important to find out what people think of you, in this case, libraries and their main clientele, faculty, even if what you find out may need a dozen qualifications surrounding it. Second, we librarians live, as the saying goes, in interesting times. Libraries and librarians are either on the cusp of something new and exciting, or on the edge of the abyss, soon to fall into oblivion, so finding out what people think should be important to us. Finally, if we listen carefully, we may be able to strengthen the good and weaken the bad, so why not take a peek?

I am not the first to take this on, by any means. **Barbara Fister** had her say (<http://bit.ly/16XCmou>), as did **Wayne Bivens-Tatum** (<http://bit.ly/12o09i6>), so if you don't like what you read here, you can also go there. There are, of course many others who have commented upon it. But I am less concerned about what library bloggers have to say about such studies than what workaday librarians think about them, assuming they have time to read them among all their other regular duties.

In a word, the study indicates that faculty, one of our main clients, don't think libraries all that important any more. The previous *Ithaca Study* said about the same thing, as have other studies, such as the **Educause's ECAR Study of Undergraduate**

Students and Information Technology, 2012 (<http://bit.ly/U9NbSs>).

Neither faculty nor students think they need libraries all that much. Faculty tell us that apart from the databases they cannot afford, they don't use the library that much. Even then, they turn to us only when they cannot find what they need on the Web. Students tell us in the **Educause Study** that, while the library Website is important, other technologies are far more important, such as course management systems and, of course, our *bête noire*, Google.

What should we make of all this? Here's what I think. First of all, the studies *are* important. They aren't the be-all and the end-all, but they help us balance the anecdotal evidence we may hear from day to

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